

...Practical Matters: Using the Plates as Models to Copy

The Schemata or Plans

Most of the plates in part I of the Bague-Cerome Drawing Course contain two images: a finished drawing of a cast beside a linear schema. The schema, usually to the left, is a guide on how to accurately simplify the optical contour (*mise en trail*) of the cast next to it before starting on the actual depiction of the cast. The schema suggests a useful set of reference lines and sometimes a geometric configuration, around which it would be easy to organize the contours of one's own drawing (see, for example, the triangle drawn around and through the foot in plate I, 5). (The diagrams themselves should not be copied exactly but should be used as guides on how to begin a drawing.) Furthermore, the course presents only generalized rules on procedure; there seems to be no basic underlying formula. However, you should develop a working procedure of your own with reference to examples provided by the course. At the end of part I, when copying the last highly finished plates without a model schemata, you will have to rely on the experience gained from drawing the earlier examples.

The actual drawing* after casts were probably done by several – even many – artists from Chrome's circle of students and friends. We know the name of just one, Lecomte du Nouy (1842-1923; see "The Drawing Course" section of the Bague biography in the present study), and we can safely venture the name of another, Hippolyte Flandrin (1809-1864; see comment to plate I, 70). Bague copied their drawings on stone for printing as lithographs. The accompanying schemata all exhibit the same penchant for the use of angles, clarity in execution, and simplification of contours; it seems safe to assume that Bague drew the schemata for the drawings as he copied the finished models on stone; they represent the unifying method of part I. However, there are a few plates where the schemata are less clear (for instance, plate I, 42) and schematized without a specific underlying method. The eyes in plate I, 1, for instance, are not organized around an unvarying point where the plumb line and the horizontal cross each other – say, the pupil – or the inner corner of the eye; instead the crossing point seems to have been chosen at random. In contrast, the other Bague schemata are dear in purpose, skillfully organized, and bas

ed on
carefully chosen angle points.

This chapter introduces and defines some terms that will be used in describing a systematic procedure for copying the model drawings. There are, of course, other methods, and if you are copying the Bague drawings under supervision, the teacher or drawing master may suggest alternative procedures.

Start with the first drawing, work your way through the rest in sequence, or skip ahead judiciously based on your increased skill or the permission of your instructor. You will quickly note that each subdivision of part I ends with a challenging, highly finished drawing; the section on legs, for instance, ends with the fully modeled drawing of the legs of Michelangelo's Dying Slave (plate I, 30).

You will soon come to appreciate the skill that produced these plates, as well as their exceptional refinement. Even if you do not understand what you are copying, continue to work with accuracy. Sometimes you will not know exactly what a line or a shadow describes until you have correctly rendered it. By grasping Bague's achievement, you will raise your own power of observation and simplification.

Materials

The lithographs were made after charcoal drawings and were intended to be copied in charcoal. You should use this medium if you have adequate command of the technique. Use natural kiln-dried vine charcoal in sticks, and reserve charcoal pencils for finishing (the binder used in them makes their lines difficult to erase). Only charcoal can equal the intensity of the blacks in the reproductions, and vine charcoal erases easily. However, you should not use it as a beginner without instruction; the use of charcoal presents too many difficulties to solve by yourself.

If you are a beginner, or if you prefer pencil, you should have a selection of well-sharpened grades— 2H through 8B (remember that pencils softer than HB are difficult to use without producing slick, shiny surfaces)— and a good, kneadable eraser. Pencil cannot achieve the same density of darkness as in the plates. Any attempt to produce similar shadows with pencil will result

in a multitude of loose flecks of carbon that will repeatedly spoil other areas of your drawing. Strive instead for overall lighter shadows and relatively lighter halftones.

Some of the more detailed plates need to be enlarged before you can copy them. Use a good color laser printer to have them magnified two or three times. The original plate size is 60 x 46 centimeters (24 x 18 inches). In their present size, you might not be able to see or copy many of the fine details, especially if you are working in charcoal. Regardless of the drawing medium used, you need high-grade, well-sized paper with a slight tooth and a surface that can take much erasure. Seek the advice of your art-supply dealer or artists you know. Inferior materials will lead to frustration and keep you from finishing the drawing accurately and neatly.

Drawing Terms

A point is a dot or mark without dimensions on a drawing surface. A line is a mark generated by extending a point (dot) between two points on a flat surface. Two lines that intersect or join form an angle. Points, lines, and angles constitute the basic elements for constructing the contour or outline (*fm/se en trait*), the visual outer shape of an object.

Basically, drawing is the act of choosing critical elements from nature and recording them on paper while preserving their relationships. As you study the relationships of points, lines, and angles observed in nature, ask yourself: Is one point higher or lower than the other? Is one line longer or shorter than another? Is one angle more or less acute or obtuse than another? Asking these questions and making such comparisons will enable you to analyze and record the shape of the Bague cast drawings or of any other object.

One of the goals of the course is to teach you to estimate distances, angles, and relationships with your eye. Some students use a pencil, a knitting needle, a taut piece of string, or a plumb line—held with outstretched, locked arms and one eye closed—in order to more accurately measure the distances between certain points on the model and on their paper. This practice requires that you always look at the drawing or object from exactly the same unvarying position (see appendix 2). Some students also use a ruler or an angle with a protractor, which may save

hours of frustration. However, you should train your eye to estimate these distances without recourse to tools.

Suggestions for Copying the Plates

step 1: Make your drawing the same size as the plate you are using. This will facilitate direct comparison with the model. Then begin each drawing by locating the extreme points on the cast: the highest point, the lowest one, and those to the left and the right. Complex poses with extended arms, feet, and joints may require another dot or two to circumscribe. Make approximate marks for these four points on the paper. When joined by contour lines, they will form an irregular rectangle or shape that contains the basic shape of the cast and fixes the overall proportions. You will develop a more concise contour of the subject within this rectangle by measuring more points on the contour of the subject and placing them on the drawing, using your rectangle as a guide.

Step 2: As an organizational tool, draw a vertical reference line (hereafter referred to as a plumb line except in cases where the term might be ambiguous) on the paper by either copying the one from the schema or from the highest point of the cast. This line not only shows how the peak of the cast relates to the lowest point but also reveals how interior points for features inside the outline relate to each other. Since many of your initial calculations will be approximate, the plumb line becomes an invaluable empirical device. Additional vertical reference lines can assist in the understanding and drawing of complex areas.

Step 3: See which interior points the plumb line crosses on the plate and mark them on your drawing. For example, on plate I, 43 (Faustina) (Faustine) the plumb line intersects the top of the head and crosses through the left brow and the top of the eye. It then passes closely by the left nostril, conveniently touches the left corner of the mouth, but misses the bottom of the cast. From this line one concludes that the inward corner of the left eye relates directly to the left corner of the mouth. This is the type of observation about internal relationships that one should continually

make as the drawing progresses.

Step 4: After establishing the verticals, examine the horizontals. For example, the right extremity of plate I, 43 occurs near the hairline overhanging the projection of the nose. The line drawn horizontally across the brow indicates that the width between the plumb line and the ear on the left is much greater than the distance from the same line to the edge of the right brow, judge by sight the distances from the central plumb line to other points or angles on the contour and inside the cast; then mark their positions in your drawing. When you are drawing an entire figure and are looking at the head or feet from your standing position, do not move your head up or down, just the eyes. Failure to hold the head steady often results in elongated legs.

Step 5: Your drawing should now resemble plotted points on a graph, locating the heights and widths of the contours and interior features. Observe the angles that would be formed if the lines were connected; then join them with reference to the Bargue schema. Since the junctures of the plumb line and horizontal reference lines form right (ninety-degree) angles, use them to judge the relative degree of other angles. If the angles appear too acute or obtuse, study the finished model and correct them. Break curved lines into a series of two or more straight lines. For example, in plate I, 43 two straight lines describe the upper right brow, but seven straight lines plot the complexities of the ear. The Bargue plates offer many examples of how to abstract a complex contour into straight lines. Occasionally slightly curved lines are used instead of straight ones.

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However, almost all curves can be reduced to straight lines that cross at the apex. Breaking up curves into straight lines enables you to ascertain the exact inflection point and amplitude of the curve. When you draw curves unaided, they tend to become arcs. Moreover, when drawing an arc it is hard to know when to stop.

Noting anatomical landmarks can be helpful at the outset in order to accurately draw the outline and establish the proportions. For example, the indentation on the right side of the nose

and the pit of the neck are indicated within the outlines on plate 1, 43. Likewise marks are made for some interior forms of the ear. These notations will vary from one cast to another. Looking up unfamiliar areas or parts in anatomy books and learning their names will help clarify your thinking.

Step 6: The next step is drawing the boundaries of the shadows. At this point your copy should appear relatively close to the preliminary schema or – if the plate has three steps – the second one.

In plate I, 34 (Dante) (Dante), the division between shadow and light is indicated with a line. For the most part, the shadow line is a generalization of the shadow's complex meandering across the cast, so do not make it emphatic. Squinting at the model will help in discovering this dividing line between light and shadow, for it will consolidate the dark masses. So will looking at it in a black mirror." Do not outline the halftones (sometimes referred to as half-tints, from the French *demi-lune*).

To repeat, begin each cast drawing by determining the most important points and general angles (with the aid of a plumb line or some other tool). Do not attempt to transcribe curves; average them with a series of straight lines. Concentrate on the large forms while ignoring small ones. Continually examine and correct the outline; anticipate the next set of more complex points, straight lines, and angles before attempting any modeling.

Values and Modeling

In art theory and practice, the term value refers to the relative lightness or darkness of an area exposed to light (some writers substitute tone for value). It can also be used to describe the absolute brightness of an object (seen or imagined as being without shadow or reflection on its surface). This even value is sometimes called the local value of the object. For example, a gray object has a darker local value than a white one.

In nature, values reveal the geometry of an object in relation to a light source. For instance, each side of a cube will have a different value because each has a different spatial orientation to the light source, a different amount of received light, and – to the viewer – a unique perspective.

Similarly, the values will be affected by the kind of light hitting it (direct, diffused, or reflected) and by the strength of that light source (bright or dim). These distinctions all present difficult problems for the artist.

In drawing, the transcription of the relative values of an object is called modeling. There are three techniques for modeling: stumping (estomper), veiling (grainer), and hatching (hacher).

Stumping is the rubbing of the drawing medium into the paper, usually with the pointed end of a paper tightly rolled into a stick, called a stump (estompe). Due to its cleanliness and precision, the stump is preferable to the fingertip. Stumping produces a soft, atmospheric effect.

The second technique, veiling, involves the drawing of faint lines with the pencil or charcoal tip lightly over the paper's grain. This technique alters the value in a very subtle manner; the effect may appear much like translucent veils or glazes. Veiling is useful when modeling delicate forms in the light and where the curvature is gradual.

Hatching, the third method, is the building up of dark value by means of thin parallel lines; when these lines cross each other at angles, it is called cross-hatching. This is essentially an engraver's technique. Some purists who want all the effects in a drawing to be the product of pure line favor hatching over stumping. Hatching can strengthen the modeling achieved by stumping and veiling. Moreover, hatching adds linear direction when drawn axially and helps to create the illusion of foreshortening when drawn transversely in perspective.

Procedure for Modeling

Step 7: The same rule – work from the general to the specific – applies to modeling as well as to line drawing. Begin with the large, dark, generalized shadow; fill it in evenly while refining to the finished drawing. You may schematize the boundaries in your drawing, but remember that the edge of a shadow is seldom abrupt; still, an area is either in light or in shadow and this difference must be made clear. Once added, shadows give the illusion of sculptural relief.

In modeling the shadows, Bargue downplayed reflected light, which in nature would flood the shadows of an actual white plaster cast. The simple shadows were most likely maintain

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using a controlled, direct light and by placing the cast in a shadow box, a three-sided open box,
lined with black paper or cloth, which diminishes reflected light (see glossary and section entitled
"Excursus; Shadow Boxes" in appendix 2; see also fig. 44.")

Shadows record the effects of light and give the illusion of a shape turning in space. A focused
light source, with a fairly small aperture (like a spotlight) emphasizes form and casts a shadow that
starts out sharp-edged but becomes diffuse as it moves away from the object casting it. A general
light, such as that produced outside at noon on a cloudy day, would reduce the shadows to grayish
halftones. Classical taste emphasizes clarity of form over showy light effects; as a classicist, Bargue
used light to reveal rather than obscure form.

Step 2: After drawing the shadows, analyze the value of the halftones and place them in the
drawing. (A halftone is any variant of value between light and dark – say, white and black. There
are usually several halftones, of graduated value, in a drawing.) In the early stages of the course,
the finished drawings are separated into three values: one for the shadow, another for the halftone
area, and the white of the paper for the lights. Both the main halftone area and the shadows are
clearly indicated. However, the transition from the halftones to the light areas requires care. Notice
that the halftones can appear quite dark next to the lights and be mistaken for shadow. On a scale
of values from 1 to 9, where 9 is the value of the paper and 1 is the darkest mark that the pencil or
charcoal can make, the halftones on a white cast are around values 5 and 6. The average shadow
is around 4, which is a little darker than the value of the halftones.

Step 3: After the darkest, major shadow has been filled in, the halftones are blended into the
shadow and graduated toward the light areas. This can be extended to complete the modeling
by the recording of every value. Plate I, 56 (Male Torso, back view) (Torso d'homme, vu de dos)
illustrates the gradual lightening of values from the shadow into the halftones and from the halftones
into the light, as well as the delicate transitions within the light itself. Here, too, the halftones and
lighter values describe complex forms, as along the border of the scapula and around the dimples

near the sacrum. Pay attention to the degree of lightness and darkness represented in the finished cast drawing. Each value relates to the other values yet holds its place within the total effect.

Notice the values of the halftones from area to area along the main shadow. Where the curvature of form is more acute, there are few halftones; a gentle curve produces more. Despite the range of values used in the modeling of the torso, Bargue presented a simplification of values and forms without a confusing proliferation of detail. Such control is a hallmark of the classical style.

Step 4: In general, as the course progresses, the finished drawings grow more complex and contain areas that may appear impossible to copy, especially if you were to work from the plates in the book rather than from enlargements. Resolve a complicated area by analyzing its essential structure. For example, divide the multitudinous curb of a Roman noblewoman into recognizable yet simplified masses or shapes. Squint at the values to obfuscate distractions and to average the values into discernable areas. Get a fresh view by looking at both your drawing and the model in a mirror: backward, upside down, or even sideways. Each step completed will make you aware of the next passage to work on.

Finishing the Drawing

Finish requires time and patience. However, as you gradually become aware of how much you have learned by being careful and accurate, your patience and enthusiasm will increase. Ask for criticism from knowledgeable peers. Study your drawing; it is essential that you learn to see and correct your errors yourself. You could also make a tracing of your drawing and then lay it on top of the plate. Analyze what went wrong, especially if you are working alone. Be strict with yourself. A drawing can be stopped at any time, as long as there are no errors in it.

Remember that the academic artists of the nineteenth century whom you are learning to emulate in this course thought that finish denoted professionalism, that it indicated an orderly mind and represented the complete development of the artist's idea. It was not uncommon for an artist to spend months or even years to complete a work. Accept the fact that classical drawing skills develop slowly and plan to use as much time as needed – hours, days, or even months

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achieve a respectable finish.

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